

Dear Sir/Madam,

There is currently a major problem occurring with the process of complaints about midwives.

Several midwives around the country have had conditions placed on their registration due to complaints. These complaints are mostly from hospital staff when a labouring woman and her partner are transferring from a homebirth. Most of these restrictions demand that the independent midwife can only practice midwifery within a hospital birthing unit. This brings their homebirth practice to a screaming halt, leaving their women without a care provider and the midwife without an income!

The process as it currently stands is this –

The hospital staff or anyone put in a complaint to the Nursing and Midwifery Board (NMB) about a midwife. The Board meet monthly and decide whether the complaint needs to go to investigation or not. In some cases they'll decide it doesn't need an investigation and the conditions will automatically go onto the midwives registration. If they decide it needs investigating they slap 'interim conditions' on the midwives registration. In the case of homebirth midwives the conditions are "Must work only in a hospital and under supervision".

The investigation then goes to the HCCC and the conditions remain on the midwives registration until the investigation is complete.

Basically, it is a matter of midwives being found guilty until proven innocent.

Investigations can take a year or more. This is leaving many women without a midwife (some are 39 weeks pregnant) and leaving midwives without income – and for some it could be a matter of losing their home, as they cannot pay their mortgage etc.

What needs to be made very clear is that this process of complaints is unfair, unjust and unethical. No conditions should be placed on any midwife until the investigation has taken place. Unless of course it was something incredibly bad like a midwife turning up to a birth intoxicated, sexual abuse – that sort of thing.

Many women, including myself are ardent about protecting the rights of women to have birth choices. My fear is that without the support if the independent midwife women will choose to free birth (birth at home without the assistance of anyone well trained and experienced in birth).

What I am asking for is a fair trial and for midwives to be treated under the principle 'innocent until proven guilty', or even 'a fair go' would be appropriate under these circumstances.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my thoughts and opinions on this very important matter.

Yours Sincerely.